

A PARENT'S INFORMATION GUIDE
TO THE PROCESS, RIGHTS,
BENEFITS, AND CONCERNS,
OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

MASTER'S PROJECT

Submitted to the Department of Elementary Education,
University of Dayton, in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education

by

Scott C. Haynes
University of Dayton
Dayton, Ohio
June 21, 1994

Approved by:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter:		
I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
	Purpose of the Study.....	1
	Problem Statement.....	2
II.	LITERATURE REVIEW.....	3
	What Does Inclusion Mean?.....	3
	What Inclusion Provides.....	3
	Benefits of Inclusion.....	4
	Handicapped Student's Rights.....	4
III.	PROCEDURE.....	6
IV.	RESULTS.....	7
	Overview of Handbook.....	7
	Handbook Introduction.....	9
	Handbook Chapter I.....	11
	Handbook Chapter II.....	14
	Handbook Chapter III.....	16
	Handbook Chapter IV.....	18
V.	SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS..	22
	Summary.....	22
	Conclusions.....	22
	Recommendations.....	23
VI.	Bibliography.....	24

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose for the Study

Today's schools are under increased pressure to deal with the education of the handicapped. There seems to be an initiative to include special needs students in the regular classroom. Regardless of the handicap, more legislation seems to require more time in the regular classroom for the handicapped individual. The placement of these individuals in the regular classroom has become known as inclusion.

Will all children benefit from inclusion? Research indicates that this initiative toward inclusion raises some concerns from both parents of special needs children and parents of nonhandicapped children about the education of their children (Brown, 1991). Many parents do not seem to understand the process of inclusion and many do not seem to understand the rights of their children.

The writer believes that the parents of both special needs and nonhandicapped children need to become informed on the process of inclusion, as well as, their rights and responsibilities. There seems to be confusion about the process of inclusive education. Therefore, in order for inclusion to become effective

parents must have a source of relative information that is easy to understand and answers their questions and concerns.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this handbook is to inform parents on the process, benefits, rights, and address concerns about inclusive education.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

What Does Inclusion Mean?

Inclusion is a term that means less exclusion of the handicapped students from the regular classroom.

(Department of Education, 1993). Inclusion will also require more students with disabilities in regular environments, more of the time, and in more meaningful activities. (Davern, 1991). This program also mandates that the state will provide alternatives for meeting the unique needs of the children. (Ohio Department of Education, 1993). Within this program, special education students will be placed in the regular classroom with all means necessary to succeed. (Blackman, 1992). However, inclusion does not require that all special needs students return to the regular classroom. (Learner, 1993).

What Inclusion Provides

Inclusion will provide special education services in the regular classroom environment whenever possible. (Sindelar, 1992). These services will be provided by special educators that will attend the regular classroom. (Raynes, 1991). Services will also include medical staff and aides for assistance when necessary. (Lewis, 1991). These services are provided because inclusion mandates the least restrictive environment (LRE) for a handicapped

student, (Jenkins, 1991) but at the same time, provides the same academic education to the regular students. (Giangreco, 1989). This can be seen as a great benefit of inclusion.

Benefits of Inclusion

Inclusion benefits the handicapped child by providing socialization with his/her peers. (Schottman, 1992). At the same time, students in the regular classroom will learn respect and gain compassion for special needs students. (Branlinger, 1985). The students will also benefit from the interaction that takes place between people of different abilities. (Hayes, 1990). The handicapped students will build self-esteem from the interaction and socialization that takes place. (Learner, 1993). Inclusion advocates feel it is not only beneficial for handicapped students to be in the regular classroom, but is their right. (Learner, 1993).

Handicapped Students Rights

Inclusion requires that the educational environment of a handicapped student meet the child's individual needs. (Department of Education, 1993). Advocates feel that the child has the right to the least restrictive environment. (Department of Education, 1993). Public law also states that the child has the right to nondiscriminatory evaluation and placement, as well as, periodic reevaluation. (Department of Education, 1993). These laws also allow the

parent's of special needs children to have the right of due process in terms of evaluation and placement decisions. (Fairborn City Schools, 1991).

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

The problem statement will be carried out in the form of a handbook designed for the use by parents of special needs and nonhandicapped students. The background and legal responsibilities of the school and parents will be derived from state law and reviewed literature. This will include sections of Public Law 94-142.

An explanation of how inclusion will operate will be taken from a review of the literature, as well as, personal experiences in an inclusive classroom. This will provide examples of recent inclusive practices.

The explanation of the benefits of inclusion will be taken from the review of literature, as well as, relevant textbooks pertaining to mainstreaming and inclusion.

Finally the writer will give personal accounts of concerns addressed by parents of both special needs and nonhandicapped students. These accounts were gathered in the writer's classroom during the 1993-94 school year. These accounts will include the most common concerns of the parents. Answers to these concerns will be answered through the review of school policy, literature, and public law.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The writer's handbook will be organized in the following manner:

Introduction: In this section the purpose of the handbook will be stated to the parents. A brief description of the contents will also be given.

Chapter I: This section will pertain to background information about inclusion, as well as, explain how public law effects the education of all students. Definitions, terms, and clear explanations will be stated. District responsibility will also be presented.

Chapter II: This chapter will focus on how inclusion will be implemented. It will include what students will be included, their means of instruction, and special instructional needs. An explanation of special instructional and/or medical staff will also be addressed.

Chapter III: This section will outline the benefits to both, special needs and nonhandicapped

students, of inclusion. Research will be sighted as to the academic and social benefits of inclusive education. All material will be presented in an uncomplicated and easy to understand manner.

Chapter IV: The final chapter will answer some of the most frequently asked questions of parents about inclusion. Their concerns will be answered based on research, public law, and district policy.

INTRODUCTION

In today's ever changing educational world we are faced with many challenges dealing with educating our youth. One of the most difficult aspects of education is making sure every child receives the best possible education that can be provided. When considering what the best possible education is, we must take into consideration each child's needs and abilities. Many children do not have the same intellectual, physical, or behavioral abilities that other children do. These children are often referred to as handicapped or special needs children.

A relatively new phase of educating the handicapped has recently been adopted by many school districts. The term for the program is known as inclusion. Many of you may be familiar with the term while others may have never heard of the program. The general idea is to educate all children in the regular classroom as much as possible, regardless of any handicap.

The purpose of this handbook is to educate all parents about the inclusion program. This handbook will discuss the rights and responsibilities of inclusive education, how the program will be conducted,

the benefits of inclusion, as well as, address some common concerns and misconceptions about the inclusion program. This handbook has been designed for the parents of both special needs and nonhandicapped children.

CHAPTER I

Background Information

In the last 25 years the education of the handicapped has become more important than in past years. Previously, handicapped students were either institutionalized or placed in restrictive special education classrooms. Students in these classrooms were considered to be incapable of learning. However, in 1973 Public Law 94-142 was passed. This law stated that no handicapped individual may be excluded from any educational activity because of their handicap. A handicapped individual is defined as anyone with a physical or mental impairment that substantially impairs or restricts one or more of life's major activities.

Any special needs student imaginable falls under these definitions and public law 94-142 indicates that they shall be educated in what is known as the "least restrictive environment possible". There is a wide range of educational environments. The least restrictive of these environments is the regular classroom and the most restrictive would be a hospital room. Picking the least restrictive environment depends on the severity of the handicap.

Rights and Responsibilities

Until now the only way a child has ever received special education services has been through a testing procedure and the development of an individualized education program (IEP). All of these items require parental consent. This is your right as a parent. You may chose what you feel is best. Under an inclusion program these rights do not change and each identified child will still have an IEP. It is your parental responsibility to consent to any testing involving possible learning disabilities and agree with a suggested program that you and the special education team feel will most benefit the child.

Inclusion also provides each child with the following rights:

1. Educational services will be designed to meet the handicapped child's individual needs, just as it would a nonhandicapped child.
2. Each handicapped child will be educated with nonhandicapped children, to the maximum extent appropriate.
3. Nondiscriminatory evaluation will be established to prevent misclassification or misplacement of students.
4. If the school building does not have adequate means of providing the least restrictive environment

possible, it will be the school's responsibility to add the facilities or provide for the child to attend an appropriate facility at the school's cost.

5. Handicapped students are entitled to the same free public education as any nonhandicapped student.

CHAPTER II

How the Program Works

The program design is actually quite simple. Each child should be placed in the least restrictive environment possible. This does not mean that the child will not receive the special attention they need. The idea of inclusion is to bring the child back to the regular classroom for as much of the day as possible. This means that the special education services will also be brought to the classroom. The student will then have a less restrictive environment and receive the extra help that may be needed. The special needs students will not be singled out or isolated in the classroom. The special educator that is in the classroom is there to help anyone that may need a little extra help, not just the special needs student.

The classroom teacher and special education teacher will appropriately modify any assignments to meet the needs of the child. This will allow the child to avoid any harmful frustrations that may occur.

If a child is severely handicapped and should need any medical staff on hand, it will be provided in the classroom. Many severely handicapped children will not be able to spend the entire day in the classroom, but will be included in any activities that the special

education teacher and regular classroom teacher feel would be appropriate. Speech tutoring will also be done in the regular classroom setting with the help of a speech/language pathologist.

If a child is severly below grade level in a particular area where the teachers feel that the child would not be able to succeed with modifications, then the special needs child would attend the special education classroom for as short of time as possible. Again, the idea is to eliminate as many of the special education classrooms as possible.

The regular classroom teacher and the special educators will work as a team in the classroom. Each will take turns introducing material and individually helping students. This gives all the students twice the opportunity for individualized help and exposes them to different teaching styles, while at the same time servicing the special needs child.

CHAPTER III

Benefits of Inclusion

The benefits of inclusion are wide ranging. When the idea of inclusion was formulated it was decided that one of the main reasons that special needs children should be brought back into the regular classroom was for socialization. Up to this point, the special needs children were sent out of the room for extra help. This often placed them with children of different ages and separated them from their classmates. Inclusion allows for the special needs students to become reacquainted, thus reducing the negative psychological effects of leaving the classroom.

The special needs child will also gain self-esteem when in the regular classroom. They will be able to succeed with people of their same peer group, thus producing a sense of self worth and accomplishment. The regular classroom students will also benefit greatly from the exposure to special needs students. These individuals will learn respect and gain compassion for the students with special needs and at the same time they will be able to provide peer tutoring which enhances academics and socialization. Research has shown that the more accepting students are of each others strenghts and weaknesses, the more

positive the classroom environment becomes, thus enhancing learning.

CHAPTER IV

Frequently Asked Questions

Below are some of the most frequently asked questions about inclusion from concerned parents.

Question: Is it fair to disrupt the education of twenty-five students for the inclusion of one or two?

Answer: The regular classroom student will not be hindered in any way educationally. They may even receive a more thorough education since more than one teacher will be in the room.

Question: My child struggles in school, but does not qualify for special education. Will she/he receive extra help?

Answer: Yes, the idea of inclusion is to help every student, not just the special needs child. Inclusion does not single out individuals, but acts as a tutor, enrichment, and as a prevention tool of possible academic problems.

Question: Will my special needs child be included in special area classes?

Answer: Yes, inclusion carries over into special classes like Art, Music, and Physical

Education whenever possible.

Question: Will there always be two teachers in every classroom?

Answer: It would be unrealistic to expect two teachers in every classroom, but depending on the needs of the children in the classroom there might be two teachers for a good part of the day. The shortest amount of time would be for one subject and the longest would be all day. It depends on the number of special education students.

Question: Are all special needs children from each grade placed in the same room?

Answer: Usually the special needs children are clustered into groups with similar needs, but not all in the same classroom. We might put the children that need help in the Language Arts in one class and the children that need help in Math in another. This is so the special education teacher's time may be used more profitably.

Question: How can my gifted child benefit from an inclusion classroom?

Answer: The student may act as a peer tutor in the absence of two teachers being in the classroom. Many students learn better from

fellow students than from teachers because they feel less pressure. In this way the student can use the knowledge that they acquired easily to help those who do not yet understand.

Question: Will my special needs child always be required to be in an inclusion classroom?

Answer: No, each child, by law, must be retested every three years. If the child's test results show there is no longer a need for an individualized education program, then it will be discontinued and it would not be necessary to be in an inclusion classroom. Parents have the right to view all evaluations and test results of their child and must come to an agreement about how to best educate the child. However, we feel it is socially and academically beneficial to be in an inclusion classroom.

Closing

Hopefully, this handbook has shed some light on the issue of inclusion and informed you of your rights and responsibilities, as well as, answered any questions you might have had about the issue. Please

keep this handbook as a preliminary source to any concerns that might arise.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this handbook is to inform parents on the process, benefits, rights, and concerns about inclusive education.

The problem statement was carried out in the form of a handbook that describes the background, legal aspects, rights and responsibilities, implementation, benefits, and concerns about inclusion. These were supported by reviewed literature, public law, and the writer's personal experiences in an inclusion classroom.

The results of these findings will be made available to parents of regular classroom and special needs children. It was designed to decrease confusion and misunderstanding, as well as, educate parents about the rights and responsibilities of inclusive education.

Conclusions

The writer concludes that if parents are well informed and educated as to what is going on with their child's education, they will be less likely to oppose change and become more positive about the type of education their child is receiving. They may also

become more actively involved in their child's education.

Recommendations

The writer recommends that practitioners carefully plan a way of informing parents as to how inclusion is being implemented in their building. Each building or district may have different ways of implementing inclusion. The best way to gain parent support is to keep them informed and that is the purpose of this project. Similar handbooks might be appropriate, however, with the ever changing world of education many programs become outdated quickly.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Blackman, Howard P. "Surmounting the Disability of Isolation." Focus on Exceptional Children. 49 (February 1992): 28-29.

Branlinger, Ellen and Samuel Guskin. "Implications of Social and Cultural Differences for Special Education with Specific Recommendations." Focus on Exceptional Children. (September 1985): 329-334.

Brown, L., and Vduari-Sohner, A. "How Much Time Should Students with Severe Intellectutal Disabilities Spend in Regular Education Classrooms?" Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps. 15 (1991): 231-240.

Davern, Linda; and Roberta Schnorr. "Public Schools Welcome Students with Disabilities." Teaching Exceptional Children. 20 (Fall 1991): 21-25.

Department of Education. Handicapped Person's Rights Under Federal Law. Public Law 94-142, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Fairborn City Schools. Pamphlet on Parental Due Process. 1991.

Giangreco, M. F. "Facilitating Integration of Students with Severe Disabilities." Teacher Education and Special Education. 12 (1989): 139-147.

Hayes, Alan. "The Context and Future of Judgement Based Assessment." Topics in Early Childhood - Special Education. (Fall 1990): 1-12.

Highlights in Special Education. Ohio Department of Education, Division of Special Education. 14 (Spring 1993): 1-5.

Jenkins, Joseph R. "Full Inclusion and the REI; A Reply to Thousand and Villa." Exceptional Children. 57 (May 1991): 562-564.

Lerner, Janet. Learning Disabilities Sixth Edition. Houghton Mifflin Publishing, Boston, (1993): 151-153.

Lewis, Rena B. and Donald Doorlag. Teaching Special Students in the Mainstream. Macmillan Publishing, New York. (1991): 78-85.

Raynes, Maria; Martha Snell, and Wayne Sailor. "A Fresh Look at Categorical Programs for Children with Special Needs." Phi Delta Kappan. (December 1991): 326-331.

Schattan, Richard and Jeff Benay. "Inclusive Practices Transform Special Education in the 1990's." The School Administrator. (February 1992): 8-12.

Sindelar, Paul. "Special Education's Role in Literacy and Educational Reform." Teaching Exceptional Children. (Spring 1992): 38-40.